

VOCERA PHYSICIAN/APP COMMUNICATION FAQs

General FAQs

What is Vocera?

The Vocera Collaboration Suite (VCS) application allows secure texting between physicians and advanced practice providers across Northwestern Medicine. You can also make calls with Vocera.

Why should I use Vocera?

Vocera is the preferred tool for NM clinical communications. It is HIPAA-compliant and Improves physician and care team collaboration and the patient experience by connecting people and information through secure and integrated communication when you are on- or off-campus. The more physicians who use Vocera, the more powerful it is.

Who can use Vocera?

The application is available to contracted, employed, independent, resident and house staff physicians and APPs. The inpatient care teams at Central DuPage Hospital, Delnor Hospital, Lake Forest Hospital, Marianjoy Rehabilitations Hospital, Kishwaukee Hospital and Valley West Hospital. Additional hospital care teams will receive Vocera in FY22 and FY23.

How does Vocera replace what we already do and help us do it better?

Vocera can improve communication activities currently completed in In Basket or via paging by enabling quick connections with context. Vocera also offers an enterprise-wide directory by name, location or role, message read-receipt and access to the application on your phone or computer.

How do I sign up?

Physicians and APPs need to download this application to their personal devices to begin securely communicating with each other. Log-in using your NM username and password. View download guides for [iOS Devices](#) or [Android](#) to set it up correctly.

Will Vocera drain my battery?

The battery issue has been fixed. Read the [battery performance tip sheet](#) for more information. Make sure you connect to NMMOBILE on any Northwestern Medicine campus and “forget other networks.” And, if you will be off-campus for an extended period of time, log out of the app.

Do I need to be on an NM campus to send or receive messages?

Vocera works on- and off-campus. When on-campus, you must connect to NMMOBILE in order to receive Vocera calls and messages. Off campus, Vocera will work over other Wi-Fi networks or by using cellular data.

Can I be logged in to Vocera on two different devices at the same time?

No. When you try to log in to the second device, Vocera will log you off of the first device.

Will I stay logged in to the application, or will I need to log-in each time?

You will stay logged in and will not need to re-enter your ID and password unless you logged out. After three hours of inactivity, you will need to enter a PIN you chose when you set up your account.

Can I access Vocera from a computer?

Yes. You can access the application on your mobile device and from a desktop on the Northwestern Medicine network. Visit the [Vocera Web Console](#).

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Can I access Vocera from Epic?

No, not yet. The project to add a link to Vocera in the external websites menu within Epic is in development.

Can I access SPOK through Vocera?

No, Vocera is a separate system and does not integrate with SPOK.

Can I use Vocera on an iPad or tablet?

No, the application is not available on tablets at this time.

How do I make calls?

To place a call, click the call button in a user's profile or ask the Genie to call someone by name. Incoming calls will be received like all other calls to the device.

Do I have to publish my phone number on the Vocera app?

No, you will designate a preferred contact number in the app, but it will not be published in the health system directory.

Will contacts receive my texts if their status is unavailable?

Do not call or text someone who is unavailable (a red circle around their profile picture) or who is on do not disturb (orange circle). Available contacts have a green circle.



How do I avoid getting contacted when I'm not working?

You can manage your availability in the app to avoid unwanted contact:

- Set do not disturb for texts and/or calls if you are with a patient. Your profile will show as orange.
- Log-out of Vocera if you are going on vacation or will be out for multiple days, and forward your calls to your office phone, answering service or colleague. If you are forwarding your calls to your cell phone, uncheck this option before you log out. Your profile will show as red.

Why don't we use Epic secure chat, instead?

Epic secure chat is the texting application within Epic that becomes part of the patient record. Vocera offers HIPAA-compliant text and calling for clinical and administrative topics outside of Epic that allows you to attach images.

Can I make a setting in Vocera to convert texts to voice?

Text-to-voice capability is not available. You can set the type and volume of notifications to help you know when you receive a text.

How can I find physicians if I don't know their names?

In contacts, you can search by role, site or patient care team at your location, or select "Global" from the SITES screen to search across all NM sites.

Can I send patient images in Vocera?

Yes. You will have the ability to capture and securely send images using Vocera. Patient health information remains within Vocera and is not on the physician's personal phone. However, you cannot access your device's picture library while using Vocera.

Can I view the message without clicking on it?

No. Your home screen will only show the notification, not the content. You must enable notifications in your device settings.

Will critical lab results be sent to me through Vocera?

No. Lab results go to Epic.

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How can I communicate with my patient's care team?

The Epic Treatment Team assignments is viewable in Vocera when you enter the patient's name, MRN or room, and you can call or message them directly. As a note, a consult physician should assign themselves to the care team in Epic for more efficient contact in Vocera.

How do I send urgent messages?

You can send an urgent text or call that breaks through regular calls. Urgent communications regarding patient care should be reserve for highly-emergent or life-threatening situations only.

What do notifications look like?

Vocera notifications look similar to text message notifications on your device. The banner notification shows the sender name and message subject (if applicable). The content of the message will not be visible.

How do I make calls?

To place a call, you can click the call button in a user's profile or ask the Genie to call someone by name, or you can look them up by specialty or group. Incoming calls will be received like all other calls to the device. When you are on-campus, make sure you are connected to NMMOBILE to enable voice over internet protocol (VOIP) calls using the wireless network instead of your cellular plan.

What network should I be connected to when onsite at a NM facility? You should connect to the NMMOBILE network when on-campus. Use your NM username to log in. You should "forget" any other NM networks on your phone (such as NMDATA or NMGUEST) prior to connecting to NMMOBILE.

How do I update my contact profile information? To update the contact information that displays in your profile, please email MedStaff.Office@nm.org.

Existing Communication Tools and Practices

Will Vocera replace pagers?

No. Web paging will not be turned off. Vocera enables secure text messages to other physicians and APPs and is used in addition to your pager.

Can I forward my pager to Vocera?

This functionality is not currently available.

Security and Discoverability

Is Vocera secure and HIPAA-compliant?

Yes. All messages are securely saved on Northwestern Medicine's internal server, not on a third-party site.

Will the text messages be part of the medical record?

No.

What do I do if I lose my phone?

If your phone is lost or stolen, please open a ticket in MyNM Service Center. Indicate that you had the Vocera Collaboration Suite application installed. This will allow Vocera to remotely wipe all the data in the app from your phone.

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Availability Status

Can I adjust status within Vocera to inform others of my availability to receive messages?

Yes. It is your responsibility to manage your availability. Set do not disturb after your shift and when you are not on call to silence calls and messages. If you simply close the Vocera app without logging out, it will continue to run and you will receive calls and messages. Log out when you go on vacation.

What are all the status and availability options, and what do they mean?

You can indicate your availability using three color options: green, orange and red.

- **Green** = Available: You are logged in to the application and will receive messages.
- **Orange** = Do Not Disturb: When you are in Do Not Disturb mode, you will not receive messages.
Note: Urgent calls will break through Do Not Disturb mode when you are on-campus.
- **Red** = Unavailable: You are logged out of the application or do not have connectivity to the application (Wi-Fi or cellular). You will not receive messages until you log back in or connectivity is restored.

When should I use Do Not Disturb?

Use do not disturb when you are not available. The DND feature will silence calls and texts. When you turn off DND, you will see texts and call history.

How will I know if other physicians have downloaded the app so that I can communicate with them?

If a physician has not downloaded the application, they will show up as “unavailable” (red status color).

Message Forwarding

Can message forwarding be set up for a specific time frame?

No. This function is not currently available.

Can I forward another user’s messages?

No. You can only forward your own messages.

Directory Searching

Can I look up physicians or APPs by specialty?

A: Yes. You will be able to search for a specialty and see the list of physicians or APPs in that group.

Can I text a specialty group?

A: Yes. Once you find the specialty group you are looking for, you can text that entire group or an individual in that group.

Q: Can I search for a specialty group within a specific site or hospital?

A: Yes. You can select a site or hospital, and then search for a specialty group within that site/hospital.

Q: Can I search for a specific service (ex: consulting or admitting) using Vocera?

A: This search function is not available.